



RESIDENT COMMISSIONER MEETS WITH ASTRONAUT JOSEPH ACABA THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2009

WASHINGTON,DC- Resident Commissioner Pedro Pierluisi met this afternoon with astronaut Joseph Acabá-Herrero. Acabá-Herrero is the first Puerto Rican astronaut to travel to space.

Pierluisi expressed to Acabá-Herrero the profound pride that Puerto Ricans felt when they learned of his heritage.

"Puerto Ricans have been following Joseph's story from the time we learned he had been selected to participate in the Discovery space mission. Day after day, we waited for the moment that the dream of one of our own traveling to space became a reality," said Pierluisi.

"Puerto Rico witnessed and celebrated the arrival of Joseph from space and was joyful to know that despite being born in California, he has demonstrated so much pride in his Puerto Rican roots," said the Resident Commissioner.

While in space, Acabá-Herrero—41 years old and the first Puerto Rican astronaut—carried a Puerto Rican flag in his luggage, played the sounds of "Bomba y Plena" and wore a shirt with the letters "STS-119 Boricua."

Acabá-Herrero was born on May 17, 1967 in Inglewood, California, and grew up in Anaheim, California where his parents still reside. His father is from Hatillo, PR, and his mother from San Juan, PR. Acabá-Herrero earned a bachelor's degree in geology from the University of California and in 1992 he earned a master's degree in geology from the University of Arizona. He is a member of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, spent 2 years in the Peace Corps, and was a science and math teacher at Dunnellon Middle School in Florida.

Acabá-Herrero was part of the crew on the Discovery space mission, which traveled to the International Space Station to install solar panels and a structural beam.